POULTRY-HOGS: USDA REPORTS ON RESULTS OF TESTS ON PCB CONTAMINATION IN POULTRY, HOGS, EGGS

Since the Department of Agriculture started an intensified emergency testing program several weeks ago on possible contamination of poultry, egg products, and hogs by polychlorinated biphenyls (PCB), USDA reports it has found that one lot of turkeys, one lot of hens, and one hog contained more than the maximum acceptable level of the industrial chemical.

USDA began the stepped-up tests after it was notified July 19 that the chemical had leaked from a heat exchanger into fish meal being processed at a North Carolina plant, and the meal had been sold as an ingredient in poultry feed and some hog feed in 10 Southeastern States.

In a report on its findings, USDA said tests of live poultry on the farm where the contamination was first discovered resulted in destruction of 88,000 chickens containing more than an acceptable amount of PCB.

To date, USDA has analyzed the following number of samples of slaughtered poultry and hogs: hens, 352; broilers, 126; turkeys, 143; hogs, 66; and 169 tests of processed eggs. Excess residues were found in samples representing one 250,000-pound lot of turkeys, one 5,000-10,000 lot of hens, eight lots of processed eggs involving 80,000 pounds, and the lone hog. All except the one hog were found and barred from the market. Spokesmen said the one hog "got away" and presumably reached consumers before test results showed it contained excess PCB residues. No excess residues were found in broilers.

PCB, chemically similar to DDT, is not a health hazard to humans unless consumed in heavy doses over long periods. Nevertheless, federal regulations prohibit the sale of ready-to-eat poultry and pork with more than 5 parts per million (ppm) of the chemical. The limit for eggs is 0.5 ppm.

The range of PCB found per million parts of total edible in the slaughtered poultry and hogs was: hens, 0 to 5.3; broilers, 0 to 0.7; turkeys, 0 to 11.8; and the one hog, 7.8. The eight lots of liquid, frozen, or dried eggs from four Southeast producers had a range of 0.6 to 2.8 ppm PCB.

USDA said it will continue the emergency testing program in the Southeast "until satisfied there is no reasonable likelihood of further contamination of PCBs."

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